The Indian Stage

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OUR LOOKOUT

We regret to have to observe that few Indians availed themselves of the occasion to attend the performance of "Sailbad the Sinner" by the members of the Madras Dramatic Society sometime back. We do not profess to inform our readers there was anything in the plot of the story or in the acting of it that was particularly superior. "Sailbad the Sinner" forcibly reminds us of "Sindbad the Sailor" not merely by the subtle inversion of syllables but in certain striking features of the main incidents. It is the essential absurdity of the story of "Sailbad the Sinner" that is its most irredeemable characteristic.

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Perhaps we shall be asked how anything can he tolerated which is so essentially absurd. The answer to such a question is not by any means easy. Why to childern like fairy tales and tales of impossible adventure ? And are not nearly all of us children grown up ? And who is to say what we should like or what we should not ? Most persons go to the theatre not to be lectured to, but to be merely amused. And absurdity is always amusing, is 'ripping.'

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The nonsensical, the incongruous, the ridiculous, the grotesque—these also have their place in the world, and no inconsiderable place, as it would seem, in the scheme of things. Whatever is in the world, whatever is to be found in life, has by birth-right a proper place on the stage.

The fine art of nonsense is also bound to develop. In England and in the continent of Europe it would appear to have had an extraordinary degree of rapid growth. But even there it is still inchoate. It has an endless and great future before it. We welcome it formally to the Indian stage.

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It is bewildering to contemplate the variety of dramatic development in recent times. He must be a bold man who would seek to classify them. The civilised world went mad over '*The Chantaclers.*' We have had elsewhere birds, trees, bread, articles of furniture and what not, given us for dramatic characters. Let us be on the lookout and watch what all the world is going to.

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We in India are eager to follow in the wake of England in almost every sphere of existence and activity. Of course we may pause to question whether we shall do well to follow in every respect. The extent to which foreign development might be copied or adopted without loss of individuality or self-respect belongs to a different branch of enquiry. But there is a great deal in the drama and the stage of the West that the South Indian Stage may with advantage learn.

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The Indian Drama has had a past, of which, if any one is not proud, one need

not be ashamed. But if it is to have no legitimate issue, we cannot help adopting from the West.

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In any case it is worth our while to keep up an acquaintance.

ACTING AS MERE ACTIVITY

One of the uses of acting is that it is a species of activity. It may of course seem strange to some that mere activity, as such, should be claimed to be reckoned as an advantage. It may be a matter for regret that in a world in which after thousands of years of so-called civilisation and progress there is still so much to do and so little done, non-activity should be so common as to justify mere activity, without any consideration of the object of activity, being talked of as a good in itself. It is no doubt true that there are numberless human beings who pass through life with the daily regret that they should nct have had the time to do this, or that, or a third thing and that a day should consist of only twenty-four hours and not even thirty hours. But at the same time there are large numbers of human beings who are habitually so incapable of activity of any sort, that even the ordinary requirements of living, such as eating and walking seem to them a source of annoyance and trouble. Between however these two extremes there are millions of men and women who are so lazy by temperament or else by habit, that they would not willingly put themselves to any exertion unless they felt themselves compelled to. In every civilised community the number of those who have not got to work for their livelihood, though not large, is still considerable. In the case of all those therefore who are not predisposed by nature or necessity to lead lives of camparative activity, anything that would be calculated to make them exert themselves, any activity as such, would come in as a blessing. The faculty of effort is perhaps, of all human faculties, that which requires to be kept always bright by constant if not continuous use. Though a golden quality it possesses the properties of steel. The rust of disuse corrodes it, eats into it and makes it unfit and unavailable.

The one object of all education ought to be to cultivate this faculty, to keep it alive and not to kill it; to make it grow and strong and not to put something else in its place. The future of no man can be said to be without hope, in whom that faculty is still alive; and no man, be his learning and culture ever so great, can be a living or useful member of society in whom that faculty has been dead or become paralysed. Children are encouraged to play and boys and girls are required to take part in games and sports chiefly for the development of those moral qualities at the foundation of all of which is the faculty of effort. It may no doubt seem strange that such an indispensable faculty should be sought to be cultivated and developed not directly by being devoted to and exercised in the accomplishment of, the more serious purposes of life, but so indirectly and it may also be, so ineffectively, as in play and games and sports This is no place for discussing the round-aboutness of the laws of the world. It is enough to say that to seek a thing straight-away is often not to find it. So it may be with the cultivation of the faculty of effort. It cannot therefore be of small importance either to the individual or to the community he lives in, that he is capable of

acting, at least on the stage. It is suggestive and significant that the same word should have by long usage come to be applied to actors and men of action. The attainment of a result idealised in the mind, the organisation of endeavour to the production of that result, the selection of special and subtle means, the patience with the process, the faith in the efficacy of repetition, the glow of personal satisfaction immediate on the achievement, these are all common to both. It is only those who have at any time acted on the stage or tried to act, that can realise in any degree the difficulties involved in the preparation—what it means to be able to go through your part without your making a laughing stock of yourself—to mention only a few of them,—the getting up of the words; the learning and understanding of the exact time and place the words have to be spoken in; the overcoming of one's own mannerism of voice, accent, expression, look, gesture and movement, and the habituation, instead of those, appropriate to the character; the rehearsals to be attended and the disgusting number of times one has to say and do the same things just for practice for oneself and for others; over-mastering the feeling of fright and the initial nervousness; the cultivation of the requisite presence of mind; and in a word the art of seeming to say and do naturally and impromptu under great restrictions and oppressive conditions, what you have laboriously learnt to say and do artificially. That is what acting means. The mere activity, the amount of effort involved in it, is something that will stagger one who has all his life been in the auditorium and never ventured behind the curtains. Quite a large number of young men who would not feel inclined to move their little finger for some great and good public cause or even for their own personal advancement, might be seen straining every nerve of theirs and subjecting themselves to the severe discipline and toil of all such preparation, from the mere love of acting.

It is a great thing when people realise themselves even in this way and learn the extent of effort they are capable of. Men in middle age have often been agreeably surprised by the possibility of their acting. The dead embers of effort then begin to glow. Success reacts on them as a revelation. Their mental and moral horizon is expanded. They begin to feel and find the best that is in them. And in a short time, you discover them grown up in sturdy manhood, bearing the beautiful blossoms of hope and faith and rich with the ripe fruits of self-help and charity.

THE SOCIAL DRAMAS OF IBSEN—II

(BY MR. GEORGE JOSEPH, M. A., BAR-AT-LAW)

'The Emperor and Galilean' is in a category of its own—it is a world drama in which Julian the Apostate stands in the transition between Hellenism and Christianity and seeks to re-establish a higher paganism. His is a figure of heroic stature—he raised his single arm against the world-forces which were bearing down on him finally to destroy paganism and himself. Here we have the second instance in Ibsen, the first being is Cataline—of a strong man being borne down and crushed by circumstances. But there is some indefinable quality lacking in both the dramas. They are not great dramas—the technique is perfect

but there is no vigorous life in them. This is curious because Ibsen with a perverted critical sense not unusual amongst authors regarded this as his greatestwork. Authors must have their foibles, I suppose. In 1877 we come right down on the first of that series of plays which have made him famous.

"The Pillars of Society" is an exquisite satire of modern life. Kastern Bernick was a gay young man about town who knew what was what. He was in love with Lona Tonnersen but after he came back from Paris he got into a scrape with a married actress and Dina was the result of the intrigue. There was some confusion at the time about the identity of the man. Lona's younger step brother Johan at the instance of Bernick took the blame on himself and ran away to America where Lona followed him. Bernick afterwards married Johan's sister. When the play opens Bernick is the foremost man in town respected and trusted by all. His own conscience had gone to sleep in respect of the burden of sin and shame that was borne by another for his sake. Johan and Lona return unexpectedly, while Mrs. Bernick and her friends are being helped by Rector Rorland to make clothes for the lapsed and the lost. It creates a scandal and this is peculiarly unfortunate from the consul's point of view because he is at the beginning of a speculation for the success of which he had to rely on the blind confidence of the townspeople. To make matters worse Johan makes love to Dina who is the daughter of Bernick's old adventure but who is supposed to be Johan's own daughter. The resulting complication may be imagined. Rorland tries to save Dina by claiming her on the strength of a previous betrothal but Johan is found to be one too many for him. Johan threatens to divulge Bernick's secret and Lona appeals to him to clear Johan. But Bernick refuses and tries to send Johan and Dina on a rotten ship of his. It is found out that Olaf, his own son has run away and hid himself in the same ship. Johan and Dina have gone away in another ship and Olaf returns safe. The play ends with the return of Johan and Dina to America and a confession of his sins by Bernick. The conclusion is a trifle weak but the play is right true in essence. Martha the sister of Bernick who loved Johan during all the years of his exile but who is unwittingly ignored for the sake of Dina, when he returned, has a mature greatness which we miss in Svanhild. Lona toiled and laboured for Johan in America and for his vindication at home. Her love for Bernick did not refuse in her mind the ultimate issue she was fighting for. Bernick pathetically pleads that it will be impossible for him to undo a life's work for the sake of righting a wrong that was almost forgotten. "A lie then has made you the man you are" she indignantly breaks out. Martha is gentle and suffering with quite patience and terrible forgetfulness of self for the sake of her love. You see Martha in glimpses but each glimpse gives you fresh and reverent insight into a singularly beautiful women soul. In the closing passages of Bernick's conversion, even the worldly ease loving Betty Bernick rises to a height of unconscious heroism. Rector Rorland is the type of conventional respectability and can see no farther into the meaning or significance of a new and unexpected situation than the official priest in the "Brand" could. Rorland is a most provoking person whose smug self-satisfaction almost threatens to make infidels of

us all. In this play Ibsen's radicalism and freedom from dramatic artificialities is almost achieved but the conclusion is a little melodramatic and old fashioned.

In "A Doll's House" we come not only to one of the very greatest of modern Dramas but it is of the series which contains 'Ghosts,' 'the wild Duck,' 'Rosmersholm' and 'Hadda Gabler'. It would be interesting to know how exactly Ibsen stood in 1879, just before "A Doll's House" was published. "Brand" had stamped him as a considerable force in the Drama of Norway and people were learning to hail him and Bjornsen together as the creators of the Norwegian Drama and as its highest representatives. The "Pillars of Society" had gone in the face of a respectable body of theatrical traditions and the young radicals of Germany welcomed him as a new and refreshing force in German Art. "We found our aesthetic creed. Our young eyes were opened by it to all the theatric artificiality of the day. We trembled with joy."

Ibsen wrote and published "A DOLL'S HOUSE" from Rome. Helmer is a young lawyer who is straightforward and honest as the day. His sense of honour is so high that he refuses to borrow during the first few years of his professional life because he was afraid that he might die and his creditors might go unpaid. He takes ill and the doctor says he must be taken away to the South if he was to get better. Mora his wife knows about his objection to borrow and therefore dares not suggest to him that he must raise sufficient funds for the journey to the south and the search for health and strength. But her love for Helmer is so great that she resolves to borrow the money from a money-lender. He however insists upon her father signing the bond. Her father is seriously ill and so she forges her father's name. The money lender has had a lurid career and was at one time a classfellow of Helmers. The play opens sometime afterwards and Helmer has become the Director of a Bank. In the first act Nora steps on to the stage as also Helmer. Helmer is not at all a bad husband as husbands generally go; but he has worked out to its logical conclusion the chattel notion of womanhood. His wife is a doll, a toy to him with neither soul nor life nor individuality of her own. She should be the mother of his two children and be simply a moveable ornament in his house. He treats her as a grown-up child and she does behave as a child. She has absolutely no sense of responsibility; she eats sweets like a child, lies recklessly about it when charged with it by her husband, flirts outrageously with her husband's friend—all without the slightest notion of harm or doing harm. Soon after the play opens the elements of a tragedy present themselves. Nora's creditor is threatened with dismissal from the Bank by her husband and he pleads for Nora's intercession on his behalf. Nora flatly refuses to do so and he lets her know that he is in possession of facts which put together will brand her a forger and a criminal. Nora declines to believe that what she did for saving her husband's life and sparing her father trouble can be a crime. She is just like a child with a child's knowtedge of the world and a child's sense of responsibility. 'If it is a crime' she says indignantly 'it should not be one'; but the conviction slowly dawns on her that she may be a criminal after all. Helmer is

quite unconscious of what was going on and is surprised at his little bird's being anything but merry and chirpy. The play goes on but Nora is sure all the while that her husband will take her guilt on to himself when the moment of the final test came. But to ward off the evil moment she wants to raise some money and pay off the creditor. She seeks her husband's friend Dr. Ranke but the Doctor startles her by declaring his passion for her. Nora thrills to the fact that her power over her husband may be of just the same quality. But she is sure of her husband's sacrificing himself for her sake. She had been taught sacrifice as the only doctrine for her. But she is distressed and bewildered. When on her confessing the forgery to Helmer he refuses to shield her but reproaches her as the possible cause of his worldly ruin. "No man sacrifices his honour even for those he loves" he passionately exclaims ; but the rejoinder is rich unescapable truth. "But millions of women have done so". Now Nora realises that she had been living in a doll's house with a strange man to whom she has borne two children. The problem comes right to her how to save her soul and individuality from destruction. She resolves to fly. She must save her own soul against the day of her real marriage and the true motherhood. The play ends in a gigantic interrogation. Ibsen has faced life at last. The last shred of convention which clung about him in the "Pillars of Society" has dropped off. The play ends in a paradox as life often does. What Nora will do with herself at last will ever remain an interesting question. Will she come back to Helmer purified and chastened and with an intelligent outlook on life or will she be crushed or, will she find the life of her individuality too precious to be sacrificed for the sake of any man. It will be observed that he deals with the same question here as was the subject of 'The Comedy of Love'. The advance in thought and treatment is indeed remarkable. He attacked marriage as a love destroying thing in the "Comedy of Love"—here he seems to say, it destroys souls—makes women toys and men tyrants. The man's tyranny is not always a deliberate and seldom a conscious one —but it destroys souls nevertheless. Nora goes out into freedom and truth in the outer world—the freedom may be dangerous and the truth hurtful but that is better than the living grave of a "Doll's house."

"A Doll's House" is the most mature statement by Ibsen of the essential problem and possible tragedy of marriage. Ibsen faces the allied problem of heredity in "Ghosts". It is a short play of three acts but the art of it is supreme and its impression haunting. The story is simple and obvious. Chamberlain Alving led a dissolute life in his youth and then married Helen Alving. She was really sacrificed to him for the sake of his position but she regarded it as of no great consequence. She was an innocent girl and it shocked her to see the depravity and honour of her husband's life. Her friends had hoped that marriage would improve him but it did not. She ran away to Pastor Manders who however turned her back to the stern path of duty and faithfulness to her husband. She did go back and the struggle of her life was to keep the world ignorant of his vices and revelries. A boy Oswald is born to them and she sends him away from home to save his young soul the scandal of knowing about his father's orgies. Alving de-

bauches his wife's own maid and Helen has had to marry her off to an unsuspecting carpenter to save the scandal of an illegitimate birth in the Chamberlain's own house. But Mrs. Alving brings up the girl born to her husband as a maid in the house. But the world had always looked upon the Chamberlain as a pattern of respectability and Mrs. Alving had been congratulated as a lucky person. The play opens ten years after Alving's death. An Institute was going to be opened in memory of Chamberlain Alving and Oswald had come home from Paris where he was studying art. Pastor Manders, one of the most finished of Ibsen's studies is also there. In the first Act Oswald protests against certain sanctimonious reflections of Manders on what he conceived to be the immorality of art life in Paris. Oswald goes out and Mrs. Alving startles Manders by saying that she agreed with every word Oswald had said. She reveals for the first time the true horror of the purgatory of her married life. Pastor Manders is scandalised. To precipitate matters Oswald makes love to his half sister just as his father had made love to her mother twenty years previously. Mrs. Alving exclaims "Ghosts! the couple from the conservatory has risen again." The final horror of the whole situation comes in when Oswald informs his mother that he can never work again and that he had been pronounced to be worm eaten from his birth. The sins of the father had overtaken the son. He without leading an unsteady life of any sort had been handicapped by the evil life of his father. What follows is developed in rigid sequence until we leave Oswald in the last act undoubtedly insane and crying for the sun. "The sun" he says "The sun." It is impossible to speak of 'Ghost' except in terms of enthusiasm. Yet when it was published it formed the occasion of a most acrimonious controversy. Ibsen was charged with working at a subject and the theatres refused to stage it for some years. In fact it is still proscribed in England. But there is no doubt it is a magnificent drama where every character is alive with individuality and thrilling development. Edmund Gosse says "the characters with certain obvious exceptions are rather types than persons." Now there are only five characters in the play and I am afraid that once the obvious exceptions are eliminated there will be no one left. Mrs. Alving, Oswald, Manders are certainly living persons. As for Oswald's half sister she may be a good many things but she is not a type of any sort. She is an original intense little person with a will of her own. There is one more character—who is one of the drollest carpenters I have come across in life or literature. If he is a type, I wish I could find more of his kind. Ibsen wrote "My new play has now appeared and has occasioned a terrible uproar in the Scandinavian press. Every day I receive letters and newspaper articles decrying or praising it. I consider it absolutely impossible that any German theatre will accept the play at present. I hardly believe that they will dare to play it in any Scandinavian country for sometime to come." An intense attack he certainly expected but he was quite unprepared for the howl of tumult and execration which was actually raised. Only Bjornsen was true to Ibsen in this trying time. "The only man who has stood up frankly, boldly and courageously for me is Bjornsen. It is just like him—he has in very truth a great, a kingly soul. I shall never forget

this thing he has done." "An Enemy of the People" was Ibsen's answer to this tumult.

This is the brightest and merriest of Ibsen's plays—as I certainly think it is the most widely known to English reading peoples. Just for this particular effect it seems to me that Sir Beerbohm Tree is largely responsible. Though Hedda Gabler had already been put upon the English stage, it was too intellectual and brainy a play to attract a wide audience. The cherry uncuffled Dr. Stockmann of Mr. Tree as he was in 1895 stamped the performance with singular popularity. The story is fairly well known. Dr. Stockmann the Medical Officer of a provincial town which depended for its existence and prosperity on the popularity of its mineral baths discovers that the water is charged with bacterial poison. Of course it will be a disaster to the town if the matter is published abroad. But Dr. Stockman insists upon the truth being told and a different scheme of drainage being carried out. The whole town headed by his brother the Burgomaster is up in arms: the fight for victory is between the single man in the right and a whole crowd in the wrong. The Democrats led by Houstad, the Editor and the older Whigs headed by Aslaksen the printer of the liberal newspaper declare that the majority are right—of course as a democratic shibboleth. Dr. Stockmann turns on them and says that the majority is always wrong and the minority is always right. To begin with no one believes in his enthusiasm for the truth except his daughter Petroa winsome strong-souled little creature—a very much stronger but less pathetic figure than Hedvig in "The wild Duck." Even his wife is dismayed at the calamity threatening her domestic peace. The Doctor however, sticks to his guns and because of the refusal by the printer Aslaksen to publish his pamphlet on the subject resolves to speak to the townspeople in a public meeting. Even there he is outmanœuvred by the Burgomaster who gets the audience to insist upon the Doctor's not saying a word of the truth, about the baths. He delivers an angry and passionate protest against building the town and making it flourish on a lie. The meeting breaks up in disorder and the Doctor is listened to no more. He goes home where the mob follows him and breaks his windows. On the following morning he is seen a triumphant figure in his house. He is of course dismissed from the Baths, Petro is dismissed from her place as School Mistress, his servants leave him and everything he values comes down in ruin upon him because he had dared to oppose the might of folly and falsehood. But there is one final touch of consolation. His wife comes to believe in him. He makes up his mind to remain in the town and work amongst.

"'Hamlet' is the tragedy of private life—nay, of individual bachelor-poet life. It belongs to a detached residence, a select library, an exclusive circle, to no occupation, to fathomless boredom, to impenitent mug—wumpism, to the illusion that the futility of these things is the futility of existence, and its contemplation philosophy."

BERNARD SHAW.

TELUGU DRAMATIC LITERATURE

(BY MR. P. SRINIVASACHARLU, B. A., B. L.)

Dramatic Literature in Telugu is one of recent growth. Though the Telugu poets of old from Raja Raja Narendra's time sought to develop the literature by strictly following the footsteps of their Sanscrit predecessors, it is curious to find that they left severely alone dramatic composition which in Sanscrit succeeded in calling forth high praise even from foreign critics. Our classic writers translated the epics, produced renowned *kavyams* on the Sanscrit models, compiled lexicographical works on the lines of the Sanscrit works of that class and wrote treatises on Grammar, Alankara and Rhetoric similar to those in that language. It may be stated here that even while translating the old Sanscrit works on prosody, poesy and diction, our old Telugu writers have as a body eschewed translating such portions of them as dealt with dramaturgy. Thus there is no denying that for some reason or another our old masters refrained from dramatic composition and did not care, it must be said to their discredit, to leave behind anything savouring of the drama which might at least stir their successors to action in the regions they left unexplored for reasons best known to themselves. I must say that the present day pandits draw too much upon their imagination in attempting to assign reasons for this state of things.

It was during the early part of the reign of Her Majesty Empress Victoria that the first glimmering of the Telugu Drama, in the strict acceptation of that term, was discerned and I am told that my revered teacher Mahamahopadhyaya Kokkonda Venkataratnamu Pantulu Garu was the first to venture into the unknown field bidding the less forward of his compeers follow in his wake. Under the circumstances, the appellation, Father of Telugu Drama, can well be bestowed upon him. Then followed a galaxy of poets who translated almost all the Sanscrit plays and removed the slur cast on the literature that it was devoid of dramatic composition of any kind. Before the advent of the Mahamahopadhyaya's Narakasura Vijayam, Yakshaganams (operatic religious discourses and stories in dialogue) were very common from time immemorial. But they cannot, in my opinion, be brought under the category of drama. It has always been thought, in all countries and among every natión I may say, that it is easier to inculcate religious and moral truths so as to make a lasting impression on the minds of the multitude by means of dialogue. The system followed in Yakshaganams seems to have been invented by our forefathers in view of this popular belief, music having been introduced possibly to break the monotony of a lengthy didactic discourse. But they do not come within the purview of the accepted connotation of the term "drama". Therefore we can very safely assert that it was the Victorian era that is responsible for the birth and development of the Telugu dramatic literature. I shall now attempt a brief account of the progress that has been made in this department of Telugu Literature.

The first period of Telugu Dramatic Literature teemed with translations of Sanscrit originals. Original dramas based on Puranic or Itihasic stories, written more or less on the lines of the Sanscrit masterpieces, marked the second stage of the Telugu Drama. The third stage of

progress, we are now in, is indicated by the appearance of original dramas founded on stories taken from foreign masterpieces of literature and oriental anecdotes worked out on lines indicated in Western dramatic compositions. In these works the stringent canons of dramaturgy revelled in by the Sanscrit Lakshana writers are to a great extent not followed. Erudite scholars of the old school are not wanting who take objection to this deviation from prescribed modes of writing as evidenced by treatises like Dasa-rupakam and other works of the kind. I for one would not mind this sort of deviation in a drama written specially for the stage. For the full play of emotions and for the histrionic elements in a play these rigid rules bristling with technicalities of a delicate nature impede at every step the free play of the genius of the dramatic aritist ; he is made to walk as it were on stilts.

I know that in saying this I am treading upon dangerous ground, but I do it all the same in the interests of the play-going population whose capacities to appreciate and enjoy are totally ignored by the eminent scholars that wish to see the classic purity and technical excellence of the Sanscrit writers in every vernacular drama intended for a modern audience. The modern audience consists of both the English-educated gentlemen who care more for effect than strict conformity to rules and dicta, and the multitude that care only for entertainment, being ignorant alike of rules and deviations from them. In my experience I have never found Pandits frequenting theatres and even if they do we need not cater for their special needs as they are few in number and form an infinitesimal portion of a modern audience witnessing a drama. There is another good reason for our deviation from rules prescribed in Sanscrit treatises : our old classic writers wrote no dramatic works ; they left us no treatises on dramaturgy to guide us. Evidently they cared little for dramatic composition. But the modern literati would not rest content with what they left us. They commenced a new system of writing not sanctioned by the classic writers of old. Why should there be an adherence to rules they never promulgated either in express terms or by implication ? We will not therefore be wrong in setting up a new standard suited to the age we live in. If the word "Natakam" as applied to modern dramas jars upon the sensibilities of the purists of our age, we shall with pleasure discard the name and adopt some other more convenient appellation. This discussion is a necessary preface to lead us on to the latest progress sought to be made in dramatic literature of modern times. Our Sabha has inaugurated a new era in the history of Telugu Drama by encouraging the writing of and the enacting of plays founded on social topics of everyday occurrence. In my view the importance of the drama is indicated in two directions —teaching and entertaining. The society dramas would naturally come under the latter denominations of plays and appeal largely to the hardworked citizen who comes to witness a play as a pleasant change from the tiresome activities of life which no man is free from. Telugu Literature it may safely be said is almost devoid of this entertaining class of dramatic works. I sincerely hope that our Sabha will do its best to supply the want and take a prominent place in the History of Telugu Drama as the originator of this new system of writing.

As to the language to be adopted for the characters of a social play, I am of opinion that the colloquial style is the best suited. It is rarely that we find even pandits, in everyday life, conversing with each other in severe grammatical language. A society drama must in every respect conform to what we actually meet with in everyday life. The unnatural must be conspicuous by its absence. In such a drama, intended mainly for acting, the unnatural stilted style of classical language takes away from it its entertaining character and makes it akin to our old puranic discourses, monotonous in the extreme with nothing sprightly to enliven the matter-of-fact audience.

I remember reading somewhere the remarks of a scholarly critic regarding heroes and heroines as portrayed in the Western and the Sanscrit classical dramatic works. In the former they are beings of flesh and blood endowed with just those qualities that we meet with every day of our life, decidedly human and quite within our comprehension as finite beings. The characters in the latter savour more of the ethereal than of the earthly mould. They are of an ideal kind, not of the ordinary run of humanity, quite apart from this mortal earth, but endeavouring to reach the higher plane of divine perfection. In other words, we meet in the one with men as they are and in the other with men as they should be. An Othello and a Desdemona we always have and shall have among us. A Rama and a Sita denote a standard to reach which every man and woman should strive hard in this matter-of-fact world of ours. Whether you will have the Western or the Eastern system in the working out of the characters in a drama depends upon your answer to the question: What is the main purpose of a drama? We can safely say that entertainment is at least one of the most important purposes of a drama and that we would therefore prefer the Western system of writing at least for our Society dramas.

It was not Shakespeare who first recognised the fact that all the world is a stage. Our ancient poets have repeatedly said this and, going further, dubbed God Himself the conductor of this wordly drama, styling Him Jagannataka–Sutradhara. In this earthly theatre we act our parts in various performances under the rigid superintendence of the Almighty Himself. All these performances do not universally terminate in comedy. Our experience has been that we are compelled to take part in more tragedies than comedies. Why then should a play written for the smaller stage be always devoid of a tragic termination? Should it not, to be natural, conform to the bigger drama that we take part in, under divine conductorship? Our ancient Sanscrit works on dramaturgy, no doubt, forbid the writing of tragedies. In my opinion we must encourage this departure from the rigid rule formulated obviously not for the modern age but for primitive days that have passed away never to return. In the words of Professor Ward "The strong or serious emotions are alone capable of exercising upon us that influence which, employing a bold but marvellously happy figure, Aristotle termed *purification*, and which a Greek comedian, after a more matter-of-fact fashion, thus expressed:

> For whensoe'er a man observes his fellow
> Bear wrongs more grievous than himself has known.
> More easily he bears his own misfortunes.

i.e., the petty troubles of self which

disturb without elevating the mind are driven out by the sympathetic particdaition in greater griefs, which raises while it excites the mind employed upon contemplating them." Aristotle's account of tragedy is a profound piece of aesthetic philosophy and can here be profitably referred to as being quite within the reach of our experience. He defines Tragedy as the "imitation of some noble action, great and complete in itself; in melodious diction; with different measures to suit the different parts; by men acting, and not by narration; effecting through pity and fear the purging of such feelings." In explaining Aristotle's views, Sir Alexander Grant, Bart, L. L. D., writes thus: " Men's minds are prone to be haunted by the feelings of pity and fear, and these are apt to degenerate into sentimentality. Tragedy offers noble objects whereon these feelings not only receive a right direction, but also are relieved, being removed, so to speak, for the time from the system. However, we are perhaps safe in understanding that, while Plato objected to Tragedy as tending to make men soft by the excitement of their sympathetic feelings, Aristotle said "No—those feelings will be purged and carried off from the system by the operation of Tragedy."

Aristotle discussed at length the means by which a Tragedy should excite the emotions of pity and terror. In his opinion the representation of a purely good man steeped in unmerited adversity would not be tragic but horrible; and the representation of a consummate villain receiving the retribution due to his crimes would not be a tragic story, however moral it might be. " We require the element of undeserved calamity; and yet there must be some justice, too, in the course of events, so that, while we feel sorrow for what occurs, we shall feel also that things could not have been otherwise."

COMEDY AT ROME

(TERENCE—I)

(BY MR. K. CHINNASAWMI IYER, B.A.)

The Romans never showed any originality in their literary efforts and till they came under the Greek influence they produced nothing enduring in literature. Their early attempts at Comedy were feeble and they took the form of coarse pleasantry. Of this there were four classes and the differences between one and another were not clear-cut. The first consisted of dialogue and rough repartees and became so abousive that it had to be kept within bounds by law. The second was a disconnected series of scenes representing contemporary life. It comprised dialogue, songs and dances. The third was a farce depicting low phases of town life. The last was an improvement of the second with a fixed set of characters analogous to those of the English pantomime. The plays of the last class were very popular and the first public representation of the drama at Rome took place about the year 364 B.C. During the three days of the Latin games of the years which were organised to appease the gods who had sent a pestilence upon the city, provision was made for setting apart a definite sum to meet the cost of erecting a stage and providing players. The custom became an annual one and the Ædiles on whom rested the responsibility of providing these spectacles gradually went to voluntary expense in

their production, in order to win the favour of the populace. These village revels, for they deserve no higher honour, did not develop into the literary drama.

In the third century B. C., Grecian refinement swept over Italy as a consequence of the invasion of Pyrrhus. Now arose a new class of plays which were dressed in a Greek mantle. The new Comedy at Athens arose after the fall of Grecian independence in 338 B. C. and the greatest poet of this school was Menander whose plays were adapted by the Latin Comedians, Plantus and Terence. The plays resembled modern comedy in all its essential features and they usually told an elaborated story often with a pronounced love interest. In Terence, Latin Comedy reached its high water-mark. He wrote six plays all of which are extant. The *Adelphi* is one of his best pieces and was first performed in 160 B. C. at the funeral games, of Aemilius Paulus, the Conqueror of Macedonia. The plot is full of life and animation not without constructive vigour.

Micio and Demea are two brothers of whom one lives an easy-going bachelor life in town, while the other spends his days frugally and laboriously, on a country estate. Micio, the bachelor adopts as his son Aeschinus, the elder of his brother's two children, while Demea himself brings up Ctesipho, the other. Their notions about the education of youth differ as widely as their ways of living. Micio allows the young Aeschinus to follow the bent of his fancies, and grudges no money to secure for him anything he desires. On the other hand Demea allows the son, whom he is bringing up at home, nothing beyond the necessaries of life, thinking that he will be most likely in this way to prove a credit to him. He often reproaches his brother for his extravagant and misplaced generosity, but Micio declares that a son's dutifulness, if compelled by fear, is worth little, and is quite content to pay for Aeschinus' freaks, provided he is truthful and honest about them. Both the young men get into difficulties. Aeschinus falls in love with Pamphilia, the daughter of Sostrata, a lady who lives next door to Micio, and when the play begins has already quite unknown to his indulgent parent, been nine months married to her. Ctesipho becomes enamoured of a music-girl, the slave of a rascally dealer called Sannio. He cannot find the money to buy her of her owner, and Aeschinus, pitying his case, breaks into Sannio's house and carries off the girl by force. The whole town rings with the deed and the news comes to Demea's ears. Demea goes to his brother, tells him what his indulgent son has done and expostulates with him for his behaviour, all the while pointing to the model youth, Ctesipho whom he was bringing up. The latter is full of gratitude to Aeschinus who has for his sake incurred all the risk of carrying off the music-girl. This piece of news reaches the ears of Sostrata, Pamphilia's mother and her blood boils at the faithlessness of Aeschinus who, she thought carried off the music-girl for himself. She resolves to acquaint Micio with the whole story of the secret marriage. She does so and gets a kind promise from Micio that he will treat Pamphilia justly and generously. In the meantime, the two youths arrange for a dinner in Micio's house and when Demea is found searching for his son soon after he learns that Ctesipho, his good son, is also involved in the affair of the music-girl, he is thrown

off the scent by Aeschinus' servant who gives elaborate instructions to find him. Ctesipho all the time is hiding behind the door of Micio's house. Aeschinus is greatly troubled in mind when he learns that Sostrata is accusing him. He cannot tell the truth without revealing his brother's secret. To his joy he finds his father Micio assenting to his marriage with the girl. Demea who has just returned from a fruitless search after his son learns from Micio what he is going to do in the recognition of Pamphilia as his daughter-in-law. He goes away in high dudgeon. But he now sees the futility of his own conduct and is reconciled with his brother. He resolves to take a leaf out of Micio's book and win the affections of all by humouring them. The wall separating the house of Micio from that of Sostrata is knocked down and preparations go on apace for the marriage. Micio can scarcely believe his ears when he comes to know of the changed attitude of his brother who now proposes that the old bachelor should marry Sostrata. In spite of protests he is forced to assent. All meet and Denea says he has acted thus to show that any man can be popular if he chooses to be indiscriminately generous, He agrees that Ctesipho shall retain the music-girl and the play ends.

Some of the follies of life are exposed by Terence in his admirable play in a truly humorous manner. In the training of sons, fathers should exercise discretion with rigour and temper mildness with discipline. A 'system' of bringing up children is bound to end in a failure and George Meredith has also exposed a similar mistake in his Ordeal of Richard Feveral.

JOTTINGS BY JOE

A friend of mine, a very eminent dramatic critic by the way, defined a tragedy as a play in which all the actors break down in the beginning, middle or the end or throughout, and a comedy as a play in which the actors make the audience continuously laugh at them. Since then, I have been trying hard to classify the dramas I went to see acted and I have always found not a single pure type of tragedy or comedy but only tremendous mixtures of both. Ancient art was simple but all our modern art is so complicated.

* * *

When the Madras Dramatic Society announced some days back 'Sailbad the Sinner'—a pantomime, I became very curious to see and know what a pantomime was going to be like. A few days before the performance, the kind author sent me in advance what was said to be the book of words. I wondered what the words were for and how they were going to manage the words and silence together. But my disillusionment was complete when the curtain rose, and the actors and actresses spoke and sang as much and as loud as ever. In fact I was able to hear them distinctly even from the verandah and beyond it. This was intolerable. It is true I like surprises and I asked myself whether they really intended a surprise when they announced a pantomime and gave us what was quite a noisy affair in all conscience.

* * *

As I was driving home (my friends say I have a real genius for hitting off the correct reason of things) the only other alternative explanation came upon me, that they did not know what a pantomime meant and used it merely as a grand

word for advertisement. I reached home and though it was early morning I referred to the dictionary and satisfied myself that I was right and they were wrong.

* * *

We in the Suguna Vilasa Sabha manage things very much better. We don't advertise our performances as pantomimes but give our audience downright, honest genuine, stuff. The front few rows may occasionally be disturbed by some noise from the stage but further back and especially from the gallery, the dumbshow is simply perfect and magnificent. I will warrant you can't hear a single syllable.

CORRESPONDENCE

To

THE EDITORS,

Indian Stage.

Portia's Hint to Bassanio.

SIRS,

The arguments brought forward by 'a student' in refutation of the statement of S. P., are at once amusing and one-sided. Not only do they betray a want of clear thinking but also an utter want of insight into human nature or dramatic beauty.

Human nature, it must be granted, has been the same all over and at all times and is bound to be susceptible to certain temptations and weaknesses: Portia was a human being, to all intents and purposes, what is more, a woman, but a woman gifted with great intellect as we understand from the play.

Granting for a moment that Portia did wish Bassanio to take her hint, it is hard to conceive how it would amount to a sacrilege to Portia " or through this to Shakespeare." Under the circumstances, no human being could have overcome the conflict between the impulsive and ardent inclination to throw out a hint and the strong determination not to break a sacred vow. Portia might never have deliberately intended to break the 'will' made by her father even by an hair's breadth; but the love she entertained for Bassanio was already very great; and she says.

"Pause a day or two
Before you hazard; for in choosing wrong,
I lose your company;"

This establishes beyond a doubt her great admiration and love for Bassanio.

Is it not a matter of almost every day experience, that one is often tempted to divulge to one's dearly beloved secrets, which one is forbidden to divulge?

This is the exact situation Portia finds herself in, and she may not be quite conscious of the fact that she is giving a broad hint to Bassanio.

This, I fancy, is just the situation and instead of being 'unshakespeare-like,' as "a student" ventures to assert, it shows clearly the splendid insight of the great dramatist into human nature and it further serves as an illustration of the poet's marvellous skill in describing such situations.

So the picture of a hesitating maiden, in a greatly excited condition of mind, not willing to disobey her father, yet longing to give her future husband a clue as to the choice, is thoroughly quite natural, artistic and Shakespearean.

T. N. S. RAGHAVACHARY.

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

BHÂVAPRÂKÂSÂH

BY

T. S. NARAYANA SASTRIAR, B.A., B.L.

Now the subject of his immediate composition being Nâṭya-Sâstra or Dramaturgy, and as Sadâśiva is the first originator or founder of this Science, the author next pays his obeisance to him :—

अम्बिकारसिकापांग माविस्मितमुखाम्बुजम् ।
भजे भुजंगललित महं वैय्याघ्रचर्म्मिणम् ॥ ३ ॥

Âmbikâ-rasikâ pâṇgam
Âvismita-mukhâmbujam ;
Bhajê Bhujaṅga-lalitam
Aham Vaiyyâghra-charmiṇam.

3. I adore Mahâdeva, seated on the skin of a tiger, looking all the more elegant on account of a serpent (twining round his neck like an ornament), whose lotus-like face is all-smiling as the corners of His eyes fall lovingly on Gaurî, the Mother of the universe.

That Siva is the Originator and First Founder of Nâṭya-Sâstra or Dramaturgy is evident from what the author himself is going to say in stanza 17, of this Adhikâra (Chapter). Srî Niśśaṅka Sârngadeva, the author of Saṅgîta-Ratnâkara, an exhaustive treatise on music which forms a portion of Dramaturgy, in enumerating the various authors of Nâṭya-Sâstra in their respective order up to his own time, mentions 'Sadâśiva' as the very first of those authors, the others being Gaurî, Brahmâ, Bharata etc. That this is also the opinion of Kâlidâsa, our Indian Shakespeare is apparent from the following stanza of his Mâlavikâgnimitra :—

देवाना मिद मामनन्ति मुनयः कान्तं क्रतुंचाक्षुषं
रुद्रेणेद मुमाकृतव्यतिकरे स्वांगेविभक्तंद्विधा ।
त्रैगुण्योद्भव मत्र लोकचरितं नानारसं दृश्यते
नाट्यंभिन्नरुचे र्जनस्य बहुधा प्येकं समाराधनम् ॥

Dêvâna midama mananti munayah
kântam kraṭum châkshusham,
" Rudreṇ êdam Uma-krita-vyatikarê
svange vibhaktam dvidhâ ;
Traigunyô' dbhavam atra Lôka-
charitam nânâ-rasam drîśyate,
Nâṭyam bhinna-ruchêr janasya bahu-
dha' py êkam' samârâdhanam."

The author of the Sangîta-Vidyâ-Vinoda calls Siva as the Âdi-Naṭa or the First Actor in the following stanza:—

" उद्दण्डताण्डव मुदंचितलास्यलीलां
कर्तुं स्वयं युगपदे न समुत्सुकात्मा ।
यः कामिनीकलितकामरतार्धकायः
सोऽयंविभाति विभुरादिनटः पुराणः ॥

"Uddaṇḍa-taṇḍavam udanchitalâstya-
lîlâm, Kartum svayam
Yugapadena samutsukâtma;
Yah kaminî-kalita-kamratara'r d h â
kâyah,
Sô'yam vibhâti-vibhur Âdi-naṭah
Purâṇah."

The late Râja Ravi Varma, one of the greatest of our Indian Artists—if not the greatest Artist that India has ever seen—had evidently the idea of the picutre depicted in this stanza before his mind when he drew his S'ankara Bhillî. It is certainly one of the best of his varied and numerous pictures and the sentiment of Love—Love of a higher and nobler order—is nowhere so beautifully and elegantly illustrated as in this matchless portrafture of Sankara and Bhillî.

Having thus invoked Ganes'a, who deserved to be first worshipped by all, for the removal of impediments, having next bowed to Vishṇu the S'abda Brahman, the Presiding Deity of all kinds of Poetical Compositions expressed in articulate language in one of his most prominent aspects as the embodiment of Causeless Love itself and having then adored Sadâsiva, the Originator and the First Founder of the science of Dramaturgy which he has commenced to write, the author now proceeds to pay his special obeisance to S'âradâ, the Goddess of Learning, by whose special favour he was born and named and under whose kindly guidance and instruction he was enabled and blessed to write this work.

नमामि मानसोल्लासभावनाफलदायिनीम् ।
शारदां शारदाम्भोजविशदा मभयप्रदाम् ॥ ४ ॥

Namâmi mânasâ' llâsa
bhâvanâphala-dâyinîm ;
S'âradâm S'aradâmbhôja.
vis'adâm abhaya-pradâm.

I salute S'âradâ, the Goddess of Learning whose radiance is as brilliantly white as the fresh-blown white-lotus, who willingly offers her assurance of protection from all kinds of fears and dangers to her devotees, and who unreservedly bestows all the fruits of joy which the mind of her worshipper is capable of conceiving.

From this description of S'âradâ, though short and pithy, yet most magnificient in its conception,—and one which can justify itself to serve as an example to India's greatest Artist to portray his picture of the Goddess of Learning, it is clear that Sarasvatî is the most favourite Deity of the author—that he owes his very existence and name to her special protection and that the excellence of this—his special work is entirely due to Her blessings.

Unlike most of the ancient sanskrit writers who do not furnish us with any thing but their names, the author of the Bhâva Prakâsa proceeds to give in the next seven stanzas (5—11), a short account of himself and of his family.

आर्यावर्ताहये देशे स्फीतो जनपदो महान् ।
मेरूत्तर इति ख्यातक्तस्य दाक्षिणभागतः ॥
ग्रामो माठरपूज्याख्यो द्विजसाहस्रसंमितः ॥

" A-Samudrât tu vai Pârvâd
a-Samudrât tu Paśchimat ;
Tayor evâ 'ntaram giryor
Âryâvartam vidur budhâh."

In the country called Âryâvarta there is a great and flourishing province known as Merûttara; and in the southern portion of that province there is a village by the name of Mâṯharapûjya inhabited by thousands of Brâhmaṇas.

5-6—In these three couplets, the author informs us of the village, province and country where he and his ancestors were born.

Aryâvarta (Arya + Âvarta) literally means the abode of the noble or excellent Âryas. It is particularly applied as a special name to that portion of Northern India extending from the Eastern Sea (Bay of Bengal) to the Western Sea (Arabian Sea), and situated

between the Himâlayas on the North and the Vindhyas on the South. Cf. Mânava Dharma Sâstra II-22 :

आसमुद्रात्तुवै पूर्वा दासमुद्रात्तु पश्चिमात् ।
तयोरेवान्तरं गिर्यो रार्यावर्तं विदु र्बुधाः ॥

Tato Lakshmana-nâmâ 'sîd viprah Kâs'yapa-vams'ajah ; Trims'atâ Kratubhir Vishnum tôshayâmâsâ vedavit : Vedânâm bhâshyam akaron nâmnâ yô Veda-bhûshaṇam.

OUR CRITIC

I

The Suguna Vilasa Sabha

Moliere's *Physician in Spite of Himself*, in Telugu by Mr. V. Venkatachala Aiyar.

Quite a high level of excellence was reached by the Telugu Section of the Suguna Vilasa Sabha, in its performance of this version of Moliere's famous comedy on Sunday, the 19th February. The idea of adopting one of Moliere's masterpieces is a happy one indeed and Mr. Aiyar has executed it with remarkable excellence. The audience could scarcely believe the play to be an adaptation—the setting is so thoroughly South Indian that it might well have been an original comedy. Readers of Moliere will remember, the humour turns on the absurdity of a wood-cutter being forced to act the *role* of a doctor, and the play gives admirable scope for exhibition of the comic spirit. With the additional attraction of songs, it has been made an interesting opera, and we congratulate the Sabha on this acquisition.

We must make a reference to the successful use in the play—of the dialect of the Nellore District—the author showing real talent in the very difficult task of treating even lyrics in the same medium. The vulgarity and slang of the lower classes have been reproduced with a keen observation, and the composition has therefore acquired a vividness, which few dramatic pieces in this country can boast of.

The incongruous position of a wood-cutter in the guise of a doctor, was ably represented by Mr. W. Duraiswami, and he was responsible for much of the hearty laughter which the audience enjoyed. He was however not sufficiently in his element in representing drunkenness. Mr. Aiyar's presentation of the rustic wife was good too, though we might be allowed to plead for a little toning down of the movements of the body. We do not blame Mr. Kristnasawmiah for his presentation of Gurappa, but we must admit, his refined features and delicacy of tone did not suit his character and the lyric sweetness with which he entertained the audience was a deviation, though a pleasant one, from the prevailing atmosphere of bucolic dulness and ignorance. We were reminded too forcibly of fashionable music saloons, in the midst of rustic coarseness. The country gentleman's two servants had very good situation to represent, and one of them, Mr. S. Ramachandra Row displayed some really very fine touches. Mr. Venkatarama-niah was fairly successful as the interesting nurse, Janaki. Messrs. Balasundaram and Vadivelu were open to criticism in the elopement scene as Lingamanayudu and Lakkamma—the audience missed the secret raptures of delight, expected from lovers on their way to a Gretna Green marriage. We have however no hesitation in saying that the performance was a great success and it is with great pleasure that we hear it is to be repeated this month.

II

AMALADITYA, an adaptation of *Hamlet* in Tamil, by Mr. P. Sambandam, B.A., B.L.

In his long and useful career as a play wright, it has been the privilege of Mr. P. Sambandam, to familiarise the Tamil public with a number of Shakespeare's masterpieces, and his adaptation of *Hamlet* has been regarded his finest work in the line. *The Suguna Vilasa Sabha* gave a very successful exhibition of the play on the 25th February, when there was the additional attraction of its being given in aid of the Edward Memorial Fund and under the kind patronage of Sir Murray Hammick. The composition has been too long before the public to need any detailed criticism here and its merits were brought out once more at the last performance. Mr. P. Sambandam's personation of the hero was faultless. He made a very good impression, as the faithful son brooding on his father's death, as the infuriated accuser of his wicked mother, and as the centre of a tragic catastrophe, awful in its immensity and pathetic in its consequences. There was however occasionally an element of wild impulsiveness, not consistent with the reflective hero. We are not sure if we have not seen Mr. Rangavadivelu do his Ophelia better. He was rather tame in the scene corresponding to Act III, Scene 1, of Shakespeare's play. Repeated reminders of the idea of being immured in the nunnery did not seem to produce any great effect. We are aware of the difficulties of personating madness, but 'gazing at vacancy' must ha.e been more in evidence in the scene of Ophelia's insanity. The sufferings of the hero's mother were represented by Mr. Krishnasamiah, whose action was particularly striking in the confession-scene. Mr. T. Srinivasa Raghavan gave a fairly powerful picture of the King. Mr. Damodaram's conception of Laertes was good, but his voice prevented him from producing the desired effect, and Horatio found rather a poor personator in Mr. S. Satyamurthi who was utterly unequal to the task of representing some of the most touching situations in the play. Precipitancy in speech, a disinclination to face the audience and want of expression in action, obscured this noble creation of Shakespeare, who is probably the most attractive personality in *Hamlet*. Mr. Ekambarayya was also not very successful in delineating the pompous old fool Polonius—the defect probably lay in his overdoing it and in an artificiality of manner. Mr. Vadivelu's caricature of the professional stage and Mr. Sankaran's humour as the grave-digger were commendable.

We feel it our duty to criticise in the strongest terms the transformation of the pathetic scene of Ophelia's death into an occasion for amusement, by reproducing all the grotesque realism associated with a class of funerals in the streets of Madras. We have no doubt at all, that the atmosphere of a sublime tragedy is not aided, but hopelessly marred, by the introduction of such painfully realistic details, which border on the 'vulgar.' Apart from the question of their incongruity in Guzerat, where the scene is laid, they bring down the tragic dignity of the piece. Ophelia on a simple Indian bier, followed by silent mourners, without the blowing of conches and beating of cymbals, must have drawn tears from the audience. The soundness of our position was attested by the audience the other evening, when it greeted the mourn-

ful procession with a chorus of laughter. We hope this feature will disappear, in all succeeding performances.

We congratulate Mr. P. Sambandam on the success that has uniformly attended his efforts at conveying to the Tamil public, the spirit of this great tragedy which has been the world's wonder and awe during the last three centuries.

THE MADRAS FINE ARTS EXHIBITION

The twenty-eighth exhibition of the Madras Fine Arts Society opened on the 25th February, and the public have been given another opportunity of visiting this annual, temporary Art Gallery. The specimens embrace a large variety of art-work and we are glad to notice several aspects of Indian life and civilisation reproduced in colour and canvas. A magnificent painting by the famous South Indian Artist, Mr. Rama Varma which has been exhibited must be of very great interest to the readers of the *Indian Stage*, as it deals with one of the most famous scenes in the Sanskrit Drama. The situation is from the *Malavikagnimitra* of Kalidasa. Malavika, after her rapturous dance wants the king who is sitting in state to regard her as one ' enamoured ' of him. Mr. Rama Varma has done adequate justice to every member of the group. The queen is jealous of this new rival ; the courtesan is all love, and the king dotes on her movements. By the Hall of Audience is a stately pavilion in right Hindu style, from which a number of miscellaneous spectators behold the scene of mirth and music. Beyond, is dimly seen a city spreading its towers to the sky. Two other scenes from the Indian drama have also been represented, though not with such success—the exile of Rama and Sakuntala's manifestation of love to Dushyantha. Those interested in a study of pose and expression, will find it useful to bestow some attention on two photographs from Bombay, by J. S. Taraporevala, entitled ' Betwixt Yes and No' and ' Tired Waiting.' We were glad to notice several good specimens of work by Indian ladies.

OUR BOUQUET

A PLAY ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

Peculiar interest must attach itself to a play by Mr. Frank Harris—which has appeared quite recently—in which Shakespeare himself is a character. Mr. Harris has written ' Shakespeare and his Love' from a pious ' Love of the Master ' with the desire of giving a dramatic picture of Shakespeare and his times:

' The reader, passing from the confused thought of the preface, to the play itself must be surprised to find what an interesting play it is. It is a work of pure imagination. Nearly every character in it is called by a familiar name but that is easily forgotten. The chief persons are three. One of them (named William Shakespeare) is quite an interesting character, obviously a lover of beauty and a lover of love. He sees the beauty of passion more than he desires the beauty of women. Show him a beautiful woman and he loves and till his brain he is sick for love of love; put him in her company, with everything favourable for the gratification of his love and the least thing—even a show of reluctance on the part of the lady—will prevent him from gratifying it. His brain is always on fire ; his *jecur* is but sluggish. Opposed

to him we have a healthy Philistine young fop (called Lord William Herbert), who bothers nothing about love, but has his will of the lady while his rival is vapouring. And the lady is a black-haired bold hussey (called Mary Fitton), who knows her game when she sees it, and takes from each man what he can give her. These three characters are fairly well-stated ; we can hardly say developed considering that into his four acts and an epilogue, the author has introduced twenty-four other characters, not one of whom has anything to do with the action" (*Times*).

THE TROUBLES AND TRIALS OF A DRAMATIC CRITIC

How Plays are either Made or Marred

A critic writes in the *Til-bits*.

Frequently one hears the question asked, in view of the fact that nowadays daily newspapers are sent to press about midnight do theatrical critics really write their criticisms of a new play after the fall of the curtain? Or is it true that their descriptions and criticisms are merely the outcome of watching dress-rehearsals ? Much depends upon the length of the article required. If a specially long notice of, say a Tree or a Pinero production is desired, then the dramatic critic usually finds a dress-rehearsal very helpful in the way of describing the plot of the play, characters, and dress, adding his criticism after the first performance.

When, however, say only one-third or half a column is required, the critic usually prefers to wait until the first performance before writing a line. And then he has to hustle. "The time for writing a notice of a new play has steadily lessened." Mr. Louis Cowen, the dramatic critic of the 'Morning Leader,' informed the writer recently, "Eight or nine years ago, when I first became dramatic critic of this journal, I could write until 1 a. m. But for a long time 11·55 has been the limit. Assuming the curtain to fall at 11 sharp, I have usually had thirty to thirty-five minutes for a third to half a column, which is what is usually given in the 'Morning Leader.'

Sharp Work.

"In consequence of this curtailing of time fuller notice is only possible if the curtain is down at 10.30 to 10.40 on the first night, as in one or two quite recent instances, or if the dress rehearsal is attended. Personally I prefer the former."

Mr. Frederick Fenn, the dramatic critic of the 'Daily Graphic,' and Mr. E. A. Vaughan, whose clever theatrical criticisms are such a prominent feature of the 'Daily News' and the 'Glasgow Herald,' are similarly handicapped in regard to time. The former usually has half an hour to three-quarters of an hour in which to write a notice ; while the latter says : "The last sheet of my copy on new plays has to be in the composing room by 11.45. By taking a quick taxi (not always easy to get) I am at the office after the play at any time between 11 to 11·15. Recently managers have begun half an hour earlier, which makes it easier, but does not give much time. A rehearsal is of help, but not necessarily to write from, as an ordinary rehearsal is a very dull affair."

A Sort of Sham Fight.

This statement is partly borne out by the dramatic critic of the 'Westminster Gazette,' who, in his criticism of "Lysistrata," produced by Miss Gertrude Kingston at her new theatre in John Street, Adelphi, alluded to the fact that the popular actress had departed from

the usual custom of inviting critics to the dress-rehearsal and the first night, and had only asked them to the former. "I have always felt it undesirable," says the 'Westminster Gazette' critic, "to criticize the acting on the strength of a dress-rehearsal—a sort of sham-fight affair. On several of the rare occasions when I have attended both performances I have noticed a sensible improvement on the real first night.

It will thus be seen that the dramatic critic prefers to work against time rather than write a criticism which he did not consider fair comment on the play. Of course, he is able to write a few notes during the intervals between the acts. But the dramatic critic does not, as some people imagine, sit in the stalls with a huge note-book and a bunch of pencils, and write his article with one eye glued on the leading lady and the other on his paper. It may be that the time will come when, to quote the remark of one harassed critic they will have to work with the printer's "devil" waiting at the theatre entrance for each sheet of copy; but in the meantime the critic attends the theatre quietly and unostentatiously, probably looking very bored, and beyond, perhaps making a few notes on the margin of his programme gives no sign as to who or what he is.

Troublesome Times

But, as Mr. Vaughan indicates he has to get a move'on him' as soon as the curtain goes down, and before the days of taxi-cabs many harrowing stories were told of belated critics having to write of the bewitching smiles, grace, and charm of a new musical-comedy queen in a crawling four-wheeler while they addressed the driver in unendearing terms.

Of course, there have been critics who have tried to save themselves this worry by writing a criticism beforehand from preliminary notices, without even attending a rehearsal. And sometimes the result of this excessive journalistic enterprise has been to bring ridicule on the paper. This was notably the case when one periodical published a critical though not very flattering account of a gala night at Covent Garden, which was unfortunately postponed, and another journal which gave a long description of Miss Edna May's triumphs in a musical comedy-piece a couple of days prior to the production.

Specially Invited

Probably no person is more severely criticized than the dramatic critic. One authority says that theatrical criticism has no effect upon the fortunes of a play. Columns of adulation will, it is asserted, fail to bring a penny-piece into the box office; neither will condemnation keep the public away. As a distinguished dramatist once pointed out, "A play is like a cigar. If it is bad, no amount of puffing will make it draw. If it is good, everybody wants a box at once."

And talking of boxes, it may interest readers to learn that a critic seldom pays for his seat. The editors of the various papers usually receive tickets for a first-night performance, with a letter asking the "honour" or "pleasure" of the critic's, attendance. The writer understands, however, that the 'Times' critic has always paid for his seat since there was some objection to his admittance to the Garrick Theatre on account of what, at the time, was thought to be unfair criticism.

But, generally speaking, it is quite the exception for a critic to pay for his seat. And, to quote Mr. Vaughan, "It would

make no difference if he did. No critic has ever considered himself under any obligation to the management because the ticket is given to him. Nor has any manager, within my experience, ever resented criticism because the critic was invited. I look on the sending of free tickets to the Press as the expression of a desire for comment in the newspapers."

THE ORIGIN OF TRAGEDY

The *Athenaeum* reviewing Mr. William Ridgeway's recent book on the *Origin of Tragedy* says :

The authority of Aristotle, which, whether rightly understood or not, has hitherto dominated scholars, is either corrected or rejected, and we have a totally new anthropological account of the origin of tragedy, illustrated with a wealth of comparative folk-lore which few scholars could rival. The worship of Aristotle, which was broken down by Bacon and Descartes in Philosophy, has lasted in the history of literature down to our own day, and the guesses in the 'Poetics' and the banalities in the 'Policy of the Athenians' (if that book be indeed Aristotle's), are still quoted by most of the Germans as if verbally inspired. Such things will not pass muster with Prof. Ridgeway. He excuses Aristotle's neglect of early Greek tragedy by the indulgent remark that probably the philosopher took no interest in it, but only in the tragedy which he knew as a noble form of aesthetic culture.

We think it due to the author to give our readers his own summary of the main conclusions at which he has arrived.

"The Dorians did not invent Tragedy. Representations of the sufferings of heroes were familiar features in Greece before the incoming of the worship of Dionysus. Such solemn songs and dances were part of the propitiatory rites performed at the tombs of heroes in order that they might protect their people, and that the earth through their kindly inter-position might bring forth her fruits. On the top of this primeval ancestor-worship came in a cult of a wild orgiastic kind, a ritual likewise regarded as beneficial for the promotion of vegetation and the increase of food. This new religion was gradually in many places engrafted on old local cults of heroes, and the tombs of the latter became the altars of Dionysus. The only true Dionysiac element was the dithyramb that dealt with the sorrows and adventures of Dionysus and his Satyrs. From this grew the Satyric drama, whose close union with, and at the same time rigid distinction from, tragedy as well as comedy, is thus at last explained. Further, the grand step of Thespis was to elevate the traigic drama from a mere ritual connected with some special shrine into true dramatic literature. Finally, the principle from which Tragedy sprang [the worship of ancestors] was world-wide, and by no means confined to Greece."

He elsewhere tells us that the contrast between the early recognition of the Satyric drama, and the late recognition of comedy, by the Athenian State, arises from the fact that the former was from the outset religious, and therefore of public importance for the prosperity of the country, while the latter, which grew out of mere rustic buffoonery, had no claim to respect as a religious ceremony, and accordingly the State did not take it until Tragdy had already been developed into a distinct literary genre.

DRAMATIC NEWS

THE MADRAS DRAMATIC SOCIETY.

We are glad to notice that the Dramatic Society continues to be very active this season. Here is a new announcement :

A DOUBLE BILL

The Madras Dramatic Society will produce on the 7th and 8th March, at the Museum Theatre, a double bill, the first part of which will be a short romantic comedy in one act, entitled "*Could We but See.*" or the "*Story of a Better Moment*" by A. Demain Grange, followed by Sunset, a comedy, also in one act, by Jerome K. Jerome. The casts of the two plays are as follows :—

"COULD WE BUT SEE"

Sir Richard Tressingham (The Man), *Mr. F. Leslie Coles.*

Sir Richard Tressingham (The Shadow) *Mr. R. S. F. Simson.*

Evelyn (Sir Richard's wife), *Miss Eva Sinclair.*

Joyce (A Butler), *Mr. A. L. Purves.*

"SUNSET"

Lois. } Half Sisters { *Miss. Eva Sinclair.*
Joan. } { *Miss Decoques.*

Aunt Drusilla, *Miss Molly Moore.*

Lawrence, *Mr. F. Leslie Coles.*

Azariah Stodd, *Mr. H. G. Ogden.*

Mr. Rivers (Lois' Father), *Mr. A. K. Birch.*

THE SUGUNA VILASA SABHA

The Billiard Saloon in the Sabha is now attracting a large number of members. The Executive Committe has already resolved to purchase a second table.

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The annual meeting of the Sabha will probably be held on the last week of March. The exact date will be fixed shortly.

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PERFORMANCES

Sunday 5th March, 5-30 P. M. Repetition of the Telugu Opera, entitled, 'Vidhileka Vaidyudu'. We are glad to announce that this new attempt is going to be repeated with some improvements.

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We are also glad to announce that *Chapala* an adaptation in Tamil of Mrs. Henry Woods, *East Lynne* by Mr. A. Krishnasamiah is likely to be staged in the third or fourth week of March. The date will be notified later.

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We are glad to hear that arrangements are also being made to stage a play of Shakespeare during the Shakespeare week this year.

THE THEATRE IN ENGLAND

"The theatre is weighed by the weight of commerce ; her art is of lesser consideration than her bill ; her gate-money is the measure of her success. The theatre has passed from the lordship of the artist to the lordship of the city adventurer, as though she were but a traffic in pork. We call for cures, indeed, we all confess the shabbiness of the whole thing—no real man speaks in its defence. We blame the actors, the managers, the playwrights, the Censor. We cry aloud for a National Theatre. We cry for an hundred and one cures ; but we shrink from the only cure—the giving back the theatre, from curtain to stage-door, to the artist."

REDEAGLE IN T. P.'S MAGAZINE.